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SIPDIS

PACOM FOR ADMIRAL TIMOTHY J. KEATING FROM AMBASSADOR MIRIAM K. HUGHES; COMPACFLT FOR ADMIRAL ROBERT F. WILLARD, COMMODORE WILLIAM A. KEARNS AND CAPTAIN JAMES P. RICE; COMNAVMARIANAS FOR ADMIRAL WILLIAM F. FRENCH; STATE DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/ANP

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: APPRECIATION FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY MISSION

The visit of the USNS Mercy to the Federated States of Micronesia boosted America's credibility with a strategic but currently faltering partner in the Pacific at a critical stage in our bilateral relationship. Confidence in America's friendship and commitment has soared as a result of this generous mission. The legislatures of all three of the FSM states visited, as well as the national FSM Congress, have undertaken a rare gesture to enact resolutions that express deep gratitude to the United States.

It is particularly fitting that the final stop of the USNS Mercy in its Pacific Partnership 2008 voyage took place in a former UN Trust Territory of the United States. The Mercy arrived off the coast of Weno Island in Chuuk State on August 22. Micronesians heralded the deployment as a historic reminder of America's courageous stand against tyranny in the Second World War. In Chuuk, the United States unleashed Operation Hailstone against the main Japanese naval base in the central Pacific on February 17, 1944. Japan lost 250 planes and nearly 70 vessels, which are wreathed today in brilliant corals at the bottom of Chuuk Lagoon. The liberation of Truk, in which the United States lost 26 aircraft, marked a turning point in the course of the war in the Pacific theater.

When the Mercy streamed toward this same site on August 22, FSM President Emanuel Mori and other citizens from his home state turned their gaze in awe at the sight of the return of American power and humanitarianism. President Mori and key members of his Cabinet, including the Secretaries of Foreign Affairs and Health, traveled from the capital of Palikir in Pohnpei to devote three days of personal participation to the mission. The Vice President, Speaker of the FSM Congress and several FSM Senators additionally traveled to Chuuk to endorse the mission and our reinvigorated partnership in the Pacific. President Mori stated, "I want to thank the men and women of the USNS Mercy and the Seabee teams for your kindness and friendship to the people of Chuuk and to the entire nation. We are appreciative of your humanitarian mission. We are humble and we are indeed grateful."

During their fourteen-day visit to the FSM, Mercy medical personnel treated 16,687 Micronesians (over 15 percent of the nation's total population), including in the states of Yap and Pohnpei as well as Chuuk. More than 200 surgeries took place on board the ship. Seabee construction teams renovated schools and Chuuk's decrepit and dangerous hospital.

I join the top leadership of the FSM, as well as countless Micronesians from villages, twelve outer islands, and the state capitals, in expressing my profound gratitude to the Pacific Fleet Command for sending the Mercy to Micronesia. Commodore William Kearns set the highest example of friendship, operational precision and gracious liaison at all levels. The

dinner he hosted on board for President Mori, members of the Cabinet and leaders of Chuuk State has significantly deepened our ties of cooperation. Captains James Rice, Robert Wiley and Peter Linz exuded high, consistent professionalism. Even in drenching downpours on small boats, they demonstrated warm outreach, indomitable spirit, and tireless dedication to their mission. Advance team leadership was superb in a setting that presented a series of harrowing, local obstacles. Lieutenant Commander Ryan Collins and Lieutenants Ryan Pierce and Aaron Hager anticipated and resolved all problems with unparalleled proficiency, cordiality and creative pragmatism. We are additionally indebted to our outstanding colleagues at COMNAVMARIANAS under the strong leadership of Rear Admiral William French, who provided constant support, encouragement and participation, especially during the inauguration of Seabee projects in Chuuk on September 10. We have just returned from a stunning finale.

While a full report will follow, the U.S. Embassy could not wait to express our heartfelt appreciation. The Mercy Mission has stimulated a rare outpouring of gratitude and civic mobilization in the Federated States of Micronesia, which we can build upon. Thank you for your tremendous role in boosting America's image, reinforcing the principles for which we stand as a nation, immeasurably strengthening U.S.-FSM relations, and demonstrating irrefutable Pacific Partnership in 2008 and beyond.

HUGHES